

10047 A VINDICATION of the  
Divine Attributes. M. Cary

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IN SOME  
REMARKS  
On his Grace the  
Archbishop of DUBLIN's  
SERMON,

INTITLED,  
*Divine Predestination and Foreknowledg con-*  
*sistent with the Freedom of Man's Will.*

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*It is foolish for any Man to pretend that he cannot know what Goodness and Justice and Truth in God are: for if we do not know this, it is all one to us whether God be good or not, nor could we imitate his Goodness; for he that imitates, endeavours to make himself like something that he knows, and must of necessity have some Idea of that to which he aims to be like: So that if we had no certain and settled Notion of the Goodness and Justice and Truth of God, he would be altogether an unintelligible Being; and Religion, which consists in the Imitation of him, would be utterly lost. Tillotson's Serm. vol. 6. p. 15, 16.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed by H. Hills, and Sold by the Booksellers of London  
and Westminster, 1710. Price 2 d.

## Remarks on the Archbishop of Dublin's Sermon, &c.

**T**HE Question concerning the Nature of God was esteem'd one of the most abstruse and difficult Questions in all Philosophy, by the Men of the greatest Learning and Penetration in the Heathen World. *Tully*, in the Introduction to his Dialogue of the Nature of the Gods, says, \* 'There was nothing concerning which not only the Ignorant and Vulgar, but even the Learned differ'd so much; whose Opinions, since they were so various and so contradictory to one another, might be every one false, and but one only could be true'. And in the Person of *Cotta* the Academick, he tells us, How that *Hiero the Tyrant of Syracuse* ask'd *Simonides* (who was an excellent Poet and Philosopher too) 'wherein the Nature of God consisted. *Simonides* requir'd a day's time to return him an Answer to his Question; and when he was ask'd the next day for his Answer, he desir'd two days: and doubled his time as often as the Tyrant ask'd him the Question. *Hiero* was a little surpriz'd, and ask'd him what he meant by this way of proceeding. *Simonides* reply'd, Because the longer he consider'd the matter, the more difficult it was to him'. †

\* Res enim nulla est, de quâ tantopere non solum indocti, sed docti dissentiunt. Quorum opiniones cum tam varix sint, tamque inter se dissidentes; alterum fieri profecto potest ut earum nulla: alterum certe non potest, ut plus una vera sit.

† Roges me quid, aut qualis sit Deus. Auctore utar *Simonide*: de quo cum quævisset hoc idem *Hiero* tyrannus, deliberandi causa sibi unum diem postulavit. Cum idem ex eo postridie quæreret, biduum petivit. Cum scopus duplicaret numerum dierum, admiransq; *Hiero* quæreret cur ita faceret; Quia quanto, inquit diutius confidero, tanto mihi res videtur obscurius.

But

But the Light of the Gospel, together with that clear and distinct Method of Reasoning introduc'd by the new Philosophy, has quite alter'd the face of things: and if *Tertullian* (who maintain'd the \* *Materiality* of God) was a little mistaken when he said, † ' The meanest Mechanick among Christians apprehends God, and can answer that Question which so puzzled the greatest of the Heathen Philosophers'; yet we can now with confidence produce our Notion of God, and expose before the most acute Reasoners the grounds we proceed on. We do not pretend to have any positive direct Notion of his Being, but only of his Attributes: and our Notion is, ' That he is an Eternal, Immaterial, Infinitely Perfect Being; and more particularly that he is infinitely Wise, Powerful, Just and Good'. The way whereby we arrive at this Notion of God, is by observing the several Perfections that are every where display'd in the Parts of the Universe; and knowing that these Perfections observable in the Universe have a Beginning, and knowing that what has a Beginning must receive its Existence from another Being, (for no Being can give it self a Perfection which it has not) we conclude all the Perfections visible in the World must be Attributes of the Eternal Being, from whence all particular Perfections that exist in time proceed. As for instance, when we consider the good things we enjoy, that are adapted to the Gratification of all our Facultys, and which we and all Men, even to the first Man, receiv'd from without us, and consequently from another Being; we conclude that Being *Good* from whom we receive so much *Good*. In like manner, we conclude him *Powerful*, from the marks of Power visible in the World: We conclude him *Wise*, from the admirable Harmony and Disposition in the Universe; where the Means are so well adapted to the Ends he seems to have had in view, that the World, tho' it every day grows older, yet is subject

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\* Quis negabit Deum Corpus esse, etsi Spiritus est? *Lib. 2. cont. Marc. cap. 16.*

† *First Volume of the Apology of the Fathers, lately translated into Engl. cap. 46. of Tertul. Apol.*

to no Decay, no Disorder, but that it might last for ever, if the same Almighty Being did not exert as much Power in destroying it, as he did in making it. And since the Universe is the Subject on which this *Wise, Good, Powerful and Eternal Being* displays his Perfections, we conclude that he cannot be the Universe himself, much less a Part of the Universe; and consequently that he is a Being distinct from the Universe, which we call *Immaterial* or not *Material*. After the same manner we arrive at all the Perfections that we attribute to God, (which are needless to be enumerated here) and add the term *Infinite* to all these Perfections; because nothing less than a Being of infinite Perfections can be Eternal, and nothing less can be sufficient to bestow so much on the Creatures as God has done.

Thus stands the Question of the *Nature of God* in the opinion of the generality of Christians, and particularly of almost all our modern Divines and Philosophers, as will appear to any one who will take the pains to look into the numerous Discourses that have been publish'd on the Subject. But this Age, fruitful in Disputes of all kinds, and that suffers no Question to lie unexamin'd (which Temper of the Age is certainly very much to be commended; for nothing is to be receiv'd for Truth, but what upon examination appears so, and there can hardly be any examination where there is no debate) has given a new Turn to the Question about the *Nature of God*; and notwithstanding the Light of the Gospel, and the many Discoverys in Philosophy made by the Moderns, some Men are running into the Opinion of Tully and Simonides, and do esteem the Question of the *Nature of God* as obscure and doubtful as ever. But this being a matter of nice speculation, and not generally understood in England, I shall give as clear an Historical Deduction thereof as I am able.

Mr. Bayle, in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, has, in several Articles thereof, particularly in the Articles *Origen*, *Paulicians*, *Manichæans*, and *Zoroaster*, explain'd the System of the *Manichæan* Hereticks, which in brief (according to him) 'consists in the Belief of three Eternal Beings, one of which is a good, the other a bad Being, and the third the  
' material,

' material Universe, which is the Subject whereon both of  
 ' 'em exercise their Power, the good Being producing as  
 ' much Good, and the bad one as much Evil as he can. This  
 ' Hypothesis of the *Manichæans*, absurd as it is, gives, says  
 ' he, a rational Solution of the Original of Evil, which is  
 ' more than any Christian whatsoever, who maintains the  
 ' Existence of one only eternal infinitely perfect Being can  
 ' do, whether he be a Calvinist, Arminian or Socinian; un-  
 ' less he will have recourse to this standing Principle of Di-  
 ' vines, of *captivating the Understanding to the Obedience of*  
 ' *Faith*, which they constantly make use of in the Questions  
 ' of the *Creation of Matter*, the *Reconcilableness of the Di-*  
 ' *vine Prescience with the Contingency of Events*, and the  
 ' *Liberty of Man*, the *Doctrine of the Trinity in Unity*, the  
 ' *Incarnation and Satisfaction of the Son of God*, *Original*  
 ' *Sin*, and many other Points of the greatest Consequence in  
 ' Divinity.' And he argues after this manner. Says he,  
 ' There are two sorts of Evil in the World, the *Evil of Sin*,  
 ' and the *Evil of Pain*, which are commonly call'd *Moral*  
 ' *and Natural Evil*, both which are inconsistent with the  
 ' Supposition of but one Eternal Being, that is infinitely  
 ' wise, holy, good and powerful. For a Holy and Good  
 ' Being must design the Holiness and Happiness of his Crea-  
 ' tures, and an infinitely wise Being cannot but chuse proper  
 ' means to attain this End which he proposes to himself, and  
 ' an infinitely powerful Being must be able to execute all  
 ' those means; but it is evident that both moral and natural  
 ' Evil abound in the World, and that Mankind in particular  
 ' is both miserable and sinful, therefore there cannot exist one  
 ' only Eternal Being with the foregoing Attributes. If he is  
 ' infinitely holy and good, he cannot be infinitely wise and  
 ' powerful, because nothing but want of Wisdom and Fore-  
 ' sight, or want of Power and Ability can hinder a good and  
 ' holy Being from executing his good and holy Purposes. If  
 ' he is infinitely wise and powerful, it is evident he is not  
 ' infinitely good and holy; for if he is infinitely wise and  
 ' powerful, he cannot fail in any of his Designs, but must  
 ' succeed in them all: and if he must succeed in them all,

' then all the Events in Nature must come to pass agreeably  
 ' to his Will ; and consequently he must design the Evil  
 ' of Sin and Pain with which this World abounds, and the  
 ' eternal Damnation of the greatest part of Mankind in the  
 ' next ; and therefore he is not Holy and Good. If it be  
 ' said that God permits Evil, and is only the Cause or Au-  
 ' thor of all the Good in the World,' he says, ' That An-  
 ' swer will by no means clear the Matter ; for a Being,  
 ' which can hinder Evil, but will not, is no more a perfectly  
 ' good and holy Being, than a Being that is directly the Au-  
 ' thor of Evil. And if he intends the hindrance of Evil,  
 ' but is not able to take proper measures to hinder it, or cannot  
 ' hinder it, on account of his Insufficiency to execute those  
 ' measures, he is either not an infinitely wise, or not an in-  
 ' finitely powerful Being.'

These Objections, and many others of the like nature,  
 Mr. Bayle thinks are perfectly unanswerable on the Principles  
 of Reason, but are effectually baffled and overthrown by  
 keeping close to the Holy Scripture, and *captivating the*  
*Understanding to the Obedience of Faith* ; and that we may as  
 well believe God to be a holy, good, wise and powerful Be-  
 ing, notwithstanding all the Appearances in Nature, accord-  
 ing to him, evidently show there can be no such Being, as we  
 do the Doctrine of Three Persons ; each of which, distinctly  
 consider'd, is by himself perfect God, without being able to  
 reconcile that to our Notion of the Unity of God ; or as we  
 believe the Foreknowledg of God, without being able to re-  
 concile that to the Contingency of Events, and the Liberty  
 of Man ; or lastly, as we believe Men may justly suffer for  
*Original or Birth-Sin* (as our Articles term it) that is, for Sins  
 we never committed, without being able to reconcile such  
 suffering with our common Notions of Justice. For, adds he,  
 Reason is weak, and not to be rely'd on ; and therefore we  
 believe all these things, tho' they appear as contrary to the  
 common Principles of Reason, as the Existence of an infi-  
 nitely wise, holy and good Being does : because the Holy  
 Scripture has in a multitude of Passages taught us these Mat-  
 ters of Faith.

But the Divines, not willing to extend the Principle of *captivating the Understanding to the Obedience of Faith* to so many Particulars as Mr. Bayle does, have endeavour'd to answer all the Difficultys alledg'd by him, upon the Principles of their several Sects. Mr. Jaquelot \*, a learned and ingenious Man, has answer'd on the Principles of the *Arminians*; Mr. Naudé †, a learned Mathematician of Berlin, and Mr. Placette ‡ of Copenhagen, eminent for his Learning and Piety, have answer'd on the Principles of the *Calvinists*; and Mr. Le Clerc \*\* (who makes too great a Figure to be distinguish'd by any Character I can give him) answers on the Principles of *Origen* (who deny'd the Eternity of Punishments) as Mr. Bayle objects under the Person of a *Manichean* Heretick: and if you will take their Opinions as to one another's Success in this dispute, you will find Mr. Naudé asserting, ' That if Mr. Bayle expected no other recompence for all his Labours, than the ' Glory of triumphing to his Death over the Chri- ' stian Religion, he had succeeded in his Design. ' For the truly Orthodox were silent in his Life- ' time, and the only two Men *who had enter'd* ' *the Lists against* him, being Persons (*viz.* Mr. Jaquelot ' and Le Clerc ) professing an erroneous Christianity, had ' been conquer'd in the most compleat, most full, and most

La Sou-  
veraine  
Perfection  
de Dieu,  
Vol. I. p.  
149.

\* 1. Conformité de la foy avec la raison; ou Defense de la Religion contre les principales Difficulties repandues dans le Dictionnaire de Mr. Bayle. 8vo. 1705.

2. Examen de la Theologie de Mr. Bayle. 8vo. 1706.

3. Reponse aux Entretiens de Mr. Bayle, 8vo. 1706.

† La souveraine perfection de Dieu, &c. defendue par la droite raison contre tous les objections du Manicheisme repandues dans les livres de Mr. Bayle. 8vo. 2 Vol. 1708.

‡ Reponse a deux Objections de Mr. B. 8vo. 1707.

\*\* Parrhasiana, Vol. I. p. 310. Bibl. Ch. Tom. 7. p. 289. Tom. 9. p. 103. Tom. 10. p. 364. Tom. 12. p. 198.

Reponse  
aux deux  
Objections,  
p. 129, 130.  
Bib. Ch.  
Tom. 13. p.  
415.

‘triumphant Victory that ever was seen in the Republick of Learning. Mr. Placette says, *The Arminians or Universalists* have nothing plausible to answer to Mr. Bayle. And Mr. Le Clerc says, That if Mr. Bayle had seen Mr. Placette’s Book, he wou’d have cover’d himself under the Reputation of the Author, and wou’d have said that he was ready to subscribe to his Book without changing his Opinion, and wou’d have pretended that he was as Orthodox as Mr. Placette.’ But to return to the History of Mr. Bayle’s Answerers. Lastly, Dr. King the ABp of Dublin has answer’d to Mr. Bayle’s Objections in a new Scheme, in his Treatise *De Origine Mali*, printed both at Dublin and at London; and with relation to this whole matter, we have his Grace’s last most elaborate Thoughts in a Sermon of Divine Predestination and Foreknowledg consistent with the Freedom of Man’s Will, preach’d before the Earl of Wharton in Dublin, which has so plain a relation to the foregoing Dispute, that I think the Design of his Grace’s Sermon wou’d not have been well understood without this Historical Introduction, which I have premi’d to the Examination of it. The Method I shall take shall be,

1. To lay down his Grace’s Notion of the Attributes of God.
2. Shew what led his Grace to lay down such a Notion.
3. Offer some Considerations to his Grace against his Scheme. And,
4. Answer what may be objected to me from his Grace’s Sermon.

1. As to his Grace’s Notion of the Attributes of God. He says, P. 6. ‘When the Scriptures speak of God, they ascribe Hands, and Eyes and Feet to him: not that it is design’d we shou’d believe that he has any of these Members according to the literal signification; but the meaning is, that he has a Power to execute all those Acts, to the effecting of which these in us are instrumental.’ And Parts when the Scriptures represent God ‘as affected with such Passions

' Passions as we perceive in our selves, *viz.* as angry and  
 ' pleas'd, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his  
 ' Resolutions, as full of Mercy and provok'd to Revenge :  
 ' The meaning is, that he will as certainly punish the Wick-  
 ' ed as if he was inflam'd with the Passion of Anger; that  
 ' he will reward the Good as infallibly, as we will those for  
 ' whom we have a particular Love; that when Men turn from  
 ' their Wickedness, he will as surely change his Dispensations  
 ' towards them, as if he really repented, and had chang'd his  
 ' Mind. And herein all considering Men agree with his Grace.  
 But his Grace goes on throughout his Sermon, to give the  
 like account of the Wisdom, Mercy, Justice, Knowledg,  
 Foreknowledg, Vertue, and all other Attributes of God;  
 and makes them as improperly apply'd to him, as *Eyes or Ears,*  
*Love or Hatred,* or any humane Parts and Passions: for he  
 says, ' As the Nature and Passions of Men are thus by Analo-  
 ' gy and Comparison ascrib'd to God, so in the same manner  
 ' we find the Powers and Operations of our Minds ascrib'd to  
 ' him; *and he instances in Wisdom, and Understanding, and*  
 ' *Mercy,* which are, *says he,* P. 7. of so different a nature  
 ' from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can  
 ' conceive, that in reality there is no more likeness between  
 ' them, than between our Hand and God's Power. And that  
 ' the terms of Foreknowledg and Predestination, nay of Un-  
 ' derstanding and Will, when ascrib'd to God, are not to be ta-  
 ' ken strictly and properly; nor are we to think they are in  
 ' him after the same manner, or in the same sense that we find  
 ' them in our selves; but on the contrary, we are to inter-  
 ' pret them only by way of Analogy and Comparison, P. 8.  
 ' Again, P. 19. Wisdom as in us is as different from what we  
 ' call so in God, as Light is from Motion. Again, P. 21.  
 ' There is as great a difference between these *forsoeing* when  
 ' attributed to God, and as they are in us, as between weighing  
 ' in a Balance and Thinking, in truth infinitely greater.' Nay  
 ' he says, P. 16. ' The best Representations we can make of  
 ' God, are infinitely short of Truth.' And lastly his Grace  
 ' concludes, P. 34, 35. *That Understanding, Justice and Ver-*  
 ' *tue,* (by which it is plain he includes the moral Attributes  
 among

among the rest) are not to be understood to signify the same thing when apply'd to God and to Men. So that upon the whole, when we talk strictly and properly and metaphysically, we ought to speak not only as the beginning of the first Article of our Church directs us, *That God is without Body, Parts or Passions*; but in direct opposition to another part of it, and say that he is likewise a Being without *Wisdom and Goodness, Justice and Mercy, Knowledge and Holiness*: since his Grace says the latter are attributed to God in the same improper analogous Sense with the former.

The Idea I have given of his Grace's meaning may perhaps shock the Reader, who has always imagin'd, That the Scripture only spoke analogically when it attributed Parts and Passions to God; but that when it gave him such moral Attributes as Wisdom, Justice and Goodness, and such natural Attributes as Will and Foreknowledge, it was with design that we should take them to be really in God as they are in us, and of the same kind, only that he has them in the highest degree possible. Our Conceptions indeed of those Attributes do not reach the full extent of them as they are in God; but yet so far as our Conceptions go, they correspond to the Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Justice, Will, and Foreknowledge of God.

2. As to what led his Grace to lay down such a Notion of the Attributes of God, that will evidently appear to any one who considers the foregoing Dispute, and some particulars dropt in his Grace's Sermon. His Grace thinks, P. 33. *That if the Attributes of God 'are understood 'literally and in the same way as we find them with us, absurd and intolerable Consequences would follow.* And again, P. 34. *'If we be allow'd to argue from the Attributes 'in the literal sense of the words, hardly any one Attribute 'or Operation of God as describ'd in Scripture will be free 'from the Cavils of perverse Men.'* (His Grace shou'd have call'd 'em Reasonable, and not Perverse Men; because by saying, P. 33. *absurd Consequences would follow from understanding the Attributes of God literally*, he allows those Men he call's *perverse* to have Reason on their side.) And his Grace does

does allow in particular, P. 9. ' That the Foreknowledg and  
 ' Predetermination of God are inconsistent with the Contingency of Events and our Freedom of Will, if his Foreknowledg and Predetermination are of the same nature with ours.' And therefore as the Absurdity of giving Hands and Eyes, makes us deny God to have any Hands and Eyes; so his Grace denies any proper Foreknowledg in God, from the Inconsistency of that Attribute with the Contingency of Events and the Liberty of Man. The use his Grace makes of this analogous Notion of Foreknowledg is contain'd in these words: P. 9. ' Since we have no more proper Notion of Foreknowledg and Predetermination in God than a Man born blind has of Sight and Colours, we ought no more, *says he*, to pretend to determine what is consistent or not consistent with them, than a blind Man ought to determine from what he hears or feels to what Objects the Sense of Seeing reaches.

And this way of understanding the Attribute of Foreknowledg does without all question reach his Grace's purpose, for no Inconsistency can be perceiv'd by us to lie between two things, one of which we have no conception of: and to be sure this method of arguing clears up the Contradiction objected; for the Objection against the Foreknowledg of God, drawn from its Inconsistency with the Contingency of Events and the Freedom of Will in Man, does evidently suppose that we have a determinate Notion of Foreknowledg, and that it consists in somewhat of the same kind with Foreknowledg in us, only Foreknowledg exists in God after the most superlative manner. And therefore by understanding *Foreknowledg* in a different sense from what is suppos'd in the Objection, and not assigning any determinate sense to the word, all Objections whatever are prevented; for no Man can object to he knows not what, all Objections supposing a meaning to the Proposition objected against.

The use his Grace makes of this way of considering the Attribute of *Foreknowledg* in God, leads us to suppose that the same Difficultys made him say, all the other Attributes of  
 God

God are in him *analogically*: for I cannot imagine that a Divine of his Grace's Knowledg, Penetration, and Figure in the Church, would chuse to deny God to be Holy, Wise and Good, as we deny him to have Hands and Eyes; or that he would shock the Body of Christians (by affirming God is neither Holy, nor Wise, nor Good) who almost universally believe God to be truly Holy, Wise and Good, in the sense of those words as they are understood in common Discourse: unless he had well consider'd the Objections urg'd by Mr. Bayle from the *Manichæan* System against the Wisdom, Goodness, and Holiness of God, and thought them unanswerable; and was convinc'd that there was as much Absurdity in supposing God to be Holy, Wise and Good, as there is in supposing him to have Parts and Passions, or Foreknowledg in a literal sense.

Having thus propos'd his Grace's Notion of the Attributes of God, and what seems to me to have led his Grace into it, I proceed in the third place to offer some Considerations on his Grace's Notions.

1. According to his Grace's Notions, it is impossible for him to prove the Existence of God against Atheists. For our Conceptions or Ideas that we signify by the term *God*, must be the Subject of Proof, whenever we bring the term *God* into a Proposition: But his Grace says, P. 16. *All our best Conceptions of God are infinitely short of Truth*, and as different from Truth, P. 21. *as weighing in a Balance is from Thinking*, or as *Light from Motion*, P. 19. Therefore his Grace cannot prove the Being of God, or which is all one, the Existence of any Being that is really conformable to our Conceptions of God; unless his Grace will say, That *what is infinitely short of Truth, and different from Truth*, can be prov'd true.

2. It being evident from the foregoing Article, that whoever proposes to prove the Existence of God, must have such an Idea of God as is agreeable to the Truth of things, and conformable to the real Nature of the Being whose Existence is propos'd to be prov'd; I would ask his Grace how he would define the term *God*, if he undertook to prove God's Existence against an Atheist. It is evident, he must either contradict his Opinion, That *all our Conceptions of God are false*,  
and

and assign some *Conception* of God that he would stand by and own to be agreeable to Truth, or else acknowledg the Impossibility of proving God's Existence. And I'm inclin'd to believe his Grace would chuse the first, because there are several Passages in his Discourse, which imply a *Conception* of God that his Grace may perhaps stand by and own to be agreeable to the Truth of things; and that, as I take it, is of a *Being that is a general Cause of the wonderful Effects in Nature, to which we cannot give any particular Attributes or Perfections*: (tho' in reality, according to his Grace, this can be no better than an Analogous Conception of God, any more than the Conception of him as a Holy, Good, Merciful and Wise Being.) For his Grace says, P. 5. 'That observing the Harmony in the several Parts of the World, we are apt to consider that we could not settle things in that manner without Wisdom; and thence conclude that God, who has thus settled matters, must have Wisdom.' And observing the Effects and Results of his Wisdom in his Works, we conclude he has Understanding and Foresight.' And, *says his Grace*, it doth truly follow that God must have these or other Facultys and Powers adequate to the mighty Effects which proceed from them. And because we do not know what his Facultys are in themselves, we give them the names of those Powers that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such Effects, and call them Wisdom, Understanding, and Foreknowledg; but at the same time we cannot but be sensible, that they are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that we have no direct and proper Notion of them. Only we are sure that they have the like Effects unto those that do proceed from Wisdom, Understanding and Foreknowledg in us.' Which Words, as well as many other Passages in his Grace's Sermon, plainly evince that his Grace can have no other Notion of God, than of a Being that is a *general Cause of Effects*. Now if that be the Idea his Grace signifies by the term *God*, I will allow that the term *God* may be brought into a Proposition, and the Being of God in that sense will become capable of proof. But if that be all that is meant by that term, I see not why Athe-

ists

ists should not come into the Belief of such a Deity : for they, equally with Theists, allow some general Cause of all Effects to have eternally existed ; but, as I take it, differ from them in the Attributes of that general Cause. As for example, the Theist affirms the World was made by a wise Being, and thinks the wonderful Harmony of the Universe an admirable Evidence of the Existence of such a Being : On the contrary, the Atheist affirms Wisdom is not necessary to such a Purpose ; but that all these admirable Effects may be produc'd by Causes and Powers of which we have no Idea. And does not his Grace give up the point to these Men, in allowing the World does not proceed from a wise or intelligent Being, but only from a Being consider'd as a *general Cause*, of whose particular Attributes we have no Notion at all ? Perhaps his Grace may think there will remain a wide difference between Atheism and his Theism, because he supposes his Eternal Being to be Immaterial, and the Atheist supposes his Eternal Being to be the Material Universe. But that difference is, as I conceive, of no consequence : for if all the moral and all the other natural Attributes of God are given up as indefensible, then all the Arguments for God's Government of the World, for rewarding and punishing Men in a future State, which are drawn from the Consideration of the Attributes of God taken in a strict and literal sense, are given up. As for instance, Do not we argue for a future State from the Justice of God, and conclude that he will deal with every Man according to his Merit ? Do we not, from the same Attribute, conclude the Necessity of an Incarnate God suffering for the Sins of the World ? And do we not conclude from his Goodness, his Design to save Mankind ? And do we not infer from his Knowledg, that he takes cognizance of our Actions ; and from his Will, do we not infer our Duty ? But if none of these Attributes are in God, nor any others that we can conceive, we can never argue from them, nor infer any kind of Obligation to Duty ; for all the Motives to Duty, unless it be that of present Pleasure ( which is an Atheistical Consideration ) are solely drawn from the Consideration of the Attributes of God taken in a literal sense. How can Men

know

know God's Will, when he has *no Will*? How can Men know they shall be rewarded or punish'd in a future State, or what reason have they to think there shall be a future State, but from the Consideration of God's Justice, which will certainly make good Men amends in another State for their Sufferings in this Life, and make wicked Men Sufferers for the Pleasure their Sins gave them here? But if we lose the Use and Benefit of the Notion of God, that is, have such a Notion as has no influence on our Practice; what signifies contending with the Atheist about so poor a Speculation as the Question of the Existence of an *Eternal Immaterial Being*? For whether he be Material or Immaterial, if he can have neither Understanding, nor Will, nor Justice, it is all alike. Besides, if once the Deity be suppos'd to have no Understanding, &c. I do not see how his Grace will be able to prove the Existence of one *Eternal Immaterial Being*, if the Atheist should think it worth his while to dispute that Point with his Grace.

3. His Grace has given up the Cause intirely to Mr. *Bayle*. For Mr. *Bayle* says, There is no answering the *Manichean* Objections against some of the Attributes of God, without captivating the Understanding to the Obedience of Faith, or believing against Evidence; that is, believing God to be good, tho' it be evident, says he, he is not so; and believing him to be wise, tho' it be evident he is not so. And what says his Grace? Why he owns God is not good nor wise, and thereby yields to the force of Mr. *Bayle's* Arguments. Only Mr. *Bayle* continues to believe God is good and wise, against the force of all Human Reasoning; and his Grace supposes God is neither wise nor good: which two do not much, if at all, differ but in words; for Mr. *Bayle's* Good and Wise against Evidence and Argument, is much the same with being neither good nor wise.

4. According to his Grace, it is a matter of no great consequence what Notions Men have of God. He thinks, P. 16. that 'One who imagines God to be a mighty King that sits  
' in Heaven, and has the Earth for his Footstool, that has  
' Thousands of Ministers to attend him; that has great Love  
' and

and Favour for such as obey his Orders, and is in a Rage and Fury against the Disobedient ; and believes these things literally, will be sav'd by virtue of that Belief.' And he calls those *Officious* and *Impertinent*, P. 17. *that raise Objections* against such a Notion, and put them in Peoples Heads.

I am extremely pleas'd with his Grace's Charity in this place; and think it very well becomes a Father in the Church of Christ, the Principles of whose Holy Religion do not damn the World for Errors in Faith, so much as the Clergy when assembled in Synods think it does, or at least would persuade others that it does : but yet I beseech his Grace to consider, Whether it is not as dangerous to leave Men to themselves with such erroneous and vicious Conceptions of God ; for if they will but give themselves the least trouble to reflect on their own Notion, they must find nothing is so easy as to slide into Atheism from the Belief of a God, which they take to be such a finite, limited, corporeal, *immoral* (as Fury and Rage import) Being as his Grace describes. I hope his Grace is of Opinion, That the Being of God, which is the Foundation of all Religion and Morality, is capable of the clearest proof imaginable ; and consequently that there is no danger of well-meaning Mens running into Atheism, if they should happen to be convinc'd that they have erroneous Conceptions of God. But suppose his Grace is of the Opinion of *Tully* and *Simonides*, and thinks the Question of the Being of God a difficult Problem, and that it is dangerous to disturb Men in their wrong Notions of God, for fear they shou'd have no Notion of him at all ; I must confess I cannot agree with his Grace, in thinking it wou'd be reasonable, even on that Supposition, to forbear objecting to a wrong Notion. Evidence ought to be the sole ground of Assent, and Examination is the way to arrive at Evidence ; and therefore rather than I wou'd have Examination, Arguing and Objecting laid aside, I wou'd chuse to say, That no Opinions whatever can be dangerous to a Man that impartially examines into the Truth of Things. And this I hope his Grace will assent to upon second Thoughts, rather than prevent so much good Preaching

ing as his Grace must needs do, by arguing those Men guilty of *Officiousness* and *Impertinence*, that wou'd reclaim Men from such an Error as believing *God to be like a Man*, if once the Clergy come to be of his Grace's Sentiment.

5. His Grace, by denying God to be a holy, wise, just Being, plainly contradicts all those Passages of Scripture, where the Example of God is recommended to our Imitation. When the Scripture bids us be *Holy as God is Holy*, and be *Merciful as God is Merciful*, &c. it plainly supposes us to understand the nature of those Attributes in God, and that they are of the same nature with those Qualities in us. For how else can they be a Rule to us? How can we imitate the Holiness of God, unless we know wherein his Holiness consists? If his Grace's Notion be admitted, all such Precepts are pure jargon, and signify nothing. For if the Scripture had said, *Be ye Holy as I am Rabba*, instead of *Be ye Holy as I am Holy*, the Precept would have been as intelligible as it is with the term *Holy*, which his Grace will not allow us to understand. And whereas his Grace argues, P. 16. That 'many honour and obey their Prince, who never saw nor had any personal knowledg of him': And further adds, 'This will shew us that it is not necessary we should personally know our Governour, to oblige us to perform our Duty to him; and, *says he*, if many perform their Duty to their Prince without knowing him, why should it seem strange that we should be oblig'd to do our duty to God, tho' we do not know any more of his Nature or Person, than that he is our Creator and Governour?' I beg leave to reply, That our Duty to God consists not only in Obedience to his Laws, consider'd like the Laws of earthly Princes, but in imitating the Perfections of God. Wherefore it is necessary for us to understand the Perfections of God (which are both the Reason and Rule of our Duty) in order to imitate them; and consequently his Grace's Inference will by no means hold. For we are not oblig'd to imitate the Actions or personal Qualities of a Prince, but only to obey his Laws, which may be known without any knowledg of his Person; but part of our Duty to God consists in the Imitation of him, which implies a knowledg of his Nature and Perfections.

6. His Grace has given up the Cause to the *Unitarians*, when he declares the Distinction of *Three Persons* in one God to be *but a Resemblance*, P. 12. *i. e.* not truly and really such as we mean by *Three Persons*, but only analogically such; just as *Time* and a *Line* are made to resemble one another. For suppose the Scripture did represent God thus by *Three Persons*, yet if *the Trinity of Persons* be but such a figurative or analogical Representation of something in God, I see not how his Grace can justify the putting it into a Creed, or the *Articles* of the Church, to be subscrib'd and profess'd, any more than the other figurative Expressions of the Great God. And when a Church has expressly rejected other Metaphorical and Scriptural Representations of God, saying, *Art. 1. That God is without Body, and Parts, and Passions*; ought she not for the same reason to reject this like Representation of the Deity, by a *Trinity of Persons*? The former Representation of him by *Parts and Passions* is rejected for this reason, because 'tis not strictly true, but only a Resemblance or Representation to us. And according to his Grace, the same reason lies for rejecting the latter, *viz. Three Persons*. So that I imagine there will be (by his Grace's account) the same reason for putting this into the *Articles of Faith*, *viz.* that God is *without distinction of Persons*, as well as without *Parts and Passions*. And therefore either his Grace has forsaken the Faith of the Church, who rejecting the one, and maintaining the other, must be suppos'd to account only one of them an analogical Resemblance, and the other to be real; or else the Church may possibly appear not to have acted impartially and fairly, in making so great a difference, as to admit the one Point into the *Articles* (nay to press it on Mens Belief by *Anathema's*) and to renounce the other, tho' it has the same ground for Admission as the former.

Nay, there seems greater reason for leaving the *Three Persons* out of the *Article*; because bodily *Parts and Passions* (which the Church renounces) are literally and expressly ascrib'd to God in innumerable Texts of Scripture, as all grant: but the *Trinity of Persons* is supported by remote and disputable Consequences, which some affirm are not just. And 'tis hard reasoning upon Consequences and equivalent Senses  
of

of Texts, when there is only an uncertain Analogy in the case. So that on his Grace's Principles, the *Unitarians* will think it very unrighteous dealing, that Men must renounce the express Letter of a thousand Texts, which assert Parts and Passions in God, because 'tis all but analogical; and yet be constrain'd to profess, at the same time, a distinction of Three Persons in God, which is not express Scripture; and if it were, is as much analogical as the other, which for that reason is renounc'd.

And when I read how charitably his Grace speaks of one, who in *the simplicity of his Heart believes God to be sitting in Heaven, nay to be often in a Fury and Rage* (which is a corrupt vicious Notion of God, as well as defective) saying, *Could any doubt but he would be sav'd by virtue that Belief?* and also that we may be oblig'd to do our duty to God, tho' we know no more of his Person or Nature, than that he is our Creator or Governor: I cannot but judg that one of his Grace's Charity would abhor to declare in an open Assembly, that such Men shall *without doubt perish everlastingly*, who believe no more of God's Person or Nature, than that he is Creator and Governor, or who have not a worse Notion of God than these, whom he doubts not may be sav'd. I shall not ask how then can he be past doubt, that an *Arian or Socinian* shall be damn'd everlastingly, because I will not suppose his Grace will care to make such a Profession, or that he can judg the Belief of such an one (who has the same Simplicity) to be worse than his, of whose Salvation he will not admit any doubt.

7. I observe his Grace has fail'd of his main Design pretended in this Discourse, *viz.* to manifest the *Divine Foreknowledg consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*. For,

1<sup>st</sup>. Instead of rendring these two things consistent, he has deny'd the one of them, *viz.* Foreknowledg in God, properly taken, to be at all, P. 8. Now since the Consistency of two Propositions ever implys that both of them may be true, his Grace, by his being driven thus to deny the one of them, has intimated, that the Two are not consistent; and therefore the Title of his Discourse might more properly have been, *The Divine Foreknowledg, in a proper sence, not consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will, and therefore deny'd to be in God at all.* But,

2ly. He tells us, that tho', properly and strictly taken, God has not that Foreknowledg and Understanding which we ascribe to him, yet that he *hatb other Facultys and Powers equivalent to them*, P. 5. And adds, *We are sure that they have Effects like to these, that proceed from Wisdom, and Foreknowledg in us*; which leaves us under as great Difficulty as ever; for it will be as hard to reconcile contingent Events, or the free Actions of Man's Will, to a Power equivalent to the Foreknowledg we conceive to be in God, as 'tis to reconcile them to such Foreknowledg it self. No such Power is equivalent to the Foreknowledg we ascribe to God, which does not answer to that which is the only or principal thing we intend by such Ascription, and which is imply'd in all our Notions of Foreknowledg, viz. a certainty of Mind concerning some distant future Event. This is the Effect, or rather the Nature of Foreknowledg in us, to make us certain of what will come to pass: and if God's Faculty (said to be equivalent to what we conceive in him) do include this Certainty concerning the Events, which we call contingent; here is the Difficulty still remaining, to make this Certainty and Contingency consistent, whatever be the nature of God's Foreknowledg.

I conceive his Grace mistakes in saying, P. 11. That *Foreknowledg is only assign'd to God, to give us a Notion of the Certainty of the Divine Actions*; since 'tis evident from Divine Predictions in Scripture, that 'tis to give us a Notion of God's being at a full certainty, not only of his own Acts, but also of the Actions of Men, what they shall afterwards be.

3ly. That he might shew some reason for denying proper Foreknowledg in God, his Grace says, P. 13. That *Foreknowledg in us, if certain, cannot consist with Contingency; tho' what we call so in God, may*. But since the Design of Scripture-Prophecys was to inform Men of future Events, reckon'd among the most contingent, will not this Position make those Predictions of such Events either of little use or little credit? What Events are more contingent, or what Actions more free than what were foretold of *Hazael*? 2 Kings 8. 13, 12. and of *Judas*? John 6. 64. I ask whether such Divine Predictions wou'd not beget a certain Foreknowledg

knowledg or Faith of these Events, in a true Believer? If not Foreknowledg, then of what use were they? If not certain Foreknowledg, of what credit were these Prophecys? If Men cou'd certainly know that God is true, and 'twas he who spake by the Prophet; they must needs certainly foreknow what was thus foretold 'em: So that either here is certain Foreknowledg in Men of what is most contingent, or no Events and Actions must be such. And if after all that his Grace has said, there can be certain Foreknowledg of the most free and contingent Actions, even in Man thus inform'd by God; then he will have no reason to deny proper Foreknowledg to be in God, upon this account, that with such Foreknowledg no Contingency of the Event can consist.

4thly. It appears to me that his Grace is not consistent with himself in the Point under debate; for having granted that Foreknowledg and Decrees in God, about contingent Events, are certain, P. 13. he in another place tells us, that (what we call) Foreknowledg in him may consist with *the being or not being of what is said to be foreseen or predestinated*, P. 31 which is as plain a Notion, as can be given of Uncertainty. For certain Foreknowledg of a thing, and a certain Decree that it shall be, must imply that it shall be; which is a contradiction to its never being. 'Tis the same as to foreknow certainly that a thing shall be, which never shall be; which is far from shewing a Consistency in the case.

I know it has been often suppos'd in this Dispute, that the Divine Prescience of mens freest Actions, may consist with the Possibility of their *not being* as consider'd in their Causes, but never that it could consist with their not being absolutely, nor does his Instance in St. Paul imply it. So that 'tis a little strange his Grace shou'd say, *Only of this we are sure*, &c. and that in a Discourse design'd to check and baffle the Confidence of human Understanding, in its bold Determinations about the Prescience of God, his Grace shou'd venture to speak so positively, and shou'd happen to shew the most earnest Assurance in that which to the rest of the World has appear'd to be the very darkest part of the Dispute; and therefore they durst not say what, his Grace says, is the only thing he is sure of, and which I imagine after all is a plain Mistake.

Besi des, This Assertion agrees not with what his Grace had deliver'd before, viz. *That we have no proper Notion of God's Foreknowledge and Pre-determination, any more than a Man born blind has of Sight and Colours; and therefore we ought no more to determine what is consistent or not consistent with 'em, than a blind Man ought to determine, from what he hears or feels, to what Objects the Sense of Seeing reaches.* And yet what his Grace in the former part of his Sermon has said no man ought to do, that very thing himself has adventured to do, before the End of it; for he hath determin'd something to be consistent with the Divine Prescience and Predestination, of which he has no Notion, and says, *This we are sure of, that it (Foreknowledge) may consist with the being or not being of what is said to be foreseen or predestinated.*

And indeed if this be all that follows from the Divine Predestination, that what he has predestinated may yet eventually not be; I cannot see how the Consideration of Predestination to Life Eternal can be so full of sweet and unspeakable Comfort to godly Persons, as his Grace, from the seventeenth Article of the Church, has prov'd: since by his Grace's account, this Predestination of some to Salvation may consist with its not being accomplish'd, which I am apt to think cannot be intended in that Article.

Wherefore, upon the whole, I don't see but the World had been as wise and as quiet, if their ordinary Notions of God's Attributes had never been disturb'd; especially since his Grace censures those as *very officious and impertinent, and by no means to be excus'd, who disturb weak People,* in shewing 'em the Errors of their false Notions of God. And tho' he adds, P. 17. that *when such Objections are rais'd, they must be answer'd;* yet I don't see how his Grace can plead this, having told us before, P. 1. that *this Controversy seems at last to be laid aside, as it were by Consent of considering Men of all Partys.* So that they needed no healing Hand in the case, nor were the Objections rais'd that must be answer'd. But his Grace may probably, by this Attempt, only awaken the Controversy, that he owns had at last been laid aside, by his preaching upon a Subject, which he says *seldom any now venture to bring into the Pulpit, except some very young or imprudent Preachers.*

'Tis hard to conceive his Grace cou'd have any great hopes to cure the Scepticism of the Age, by taking away the ordinary Conceptions of God's Perfections, and leaving us without any fix'd determinate Notion of one essential Attribute. The Unitarians indeed have attack'd the personal Attributes, and almost stagger'd the Age as to the Trinity of Persons in one God; but they left us the essential Attributes safe, and maintain the Wisdom, Justice and Goodness of God with earnest Zeal. And now if these must be given up too as improperly attributed to God, whither will matters run? Whither indeed! when one may not so much as say, *God knows whither,* if he has properly no Knowledge at all.

What if another shou'd take his Grace's Principles, and tell us our Notion of the Unity of God is but analogous, and not to be taken properly and strictly; and also the Notion of the Union of the Divine Nature to the Human in Christ Jesus, and our Notion of God's creating the World; and that it only means, there is something as good as but one God, and as good as a personal Union, and equivalent to Creation? What shall we say to 'em upon his Grace's Scheme?

His Grace might have some little pleasure in posing his Audience with a few innocent Riddles in *Algebra* : but if he intended 'em for this use, viz. to make 'em parallel with our Ideas of God, or to insinuate that Christians can make no more use of their Notions of God, than his unskilful Auditors cou'd of those Mathematical Difficultys ; that they can no otherwise believe their Creed concerning God and Christ, than the Unlearned can believe his Problems (which is not at all, if the Sense and Meaning of Propositions be the Object of Faith, without which Letters and Sounds stand for nothing in a Creed) I say, if this was design'd to make all our Notions of God pass for Riddles in Divinity, not to be understood, nor made use of (which follows the other) I doubt but little credit will be gain'd by it to Religion.

Tho' I'm far from abusing his Grace's Goodness presumptuously, yet methinks 'tis some comfort to consider, that such generous Charity which so tenderly guards from Censure those honest Minds, who ascribe bodily Parts and the miserable Passions of human Nature to their Creator, will doubtless be more favourable to one who only ascribes to him the Power of *Intellect* and *Will*, and such as the more noble Operations of Man, who is made after the Image of God, and so not altogether different.

And the rather, because I have avoided the Crime he warns us of, viz. *P. 17. of being officious and impertinent in putting Objections into honest Peoples heads*, against their common Notions of God according to the Letter of the Scripture. For I have the honest People on my side, and the literal Representations of the Text also; and can never be charg'd with perplexing weak Brethren with Notions and Curiosities, for establishing the literal and common Notions of God's Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, &c. whatever be thought of such as destroy them. Nor am I dealing with any weak Brethren, whilst I am only objecting to his Grace, whose nice and profound Genius shown in his elaborate Sermon, sets him at as great a distance from the Rank of weak Brethren, as that was from their Capacity or Power to make any great use of it.

Having offer'd my Reasons against his Grace's Notion of a God without Understanding, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. I come in the fourth place to consider what may be objected to me from his Grace's Sermon. His Grace says, in behalf of this Analogical Knowledge of God, *P. 10. That when we would help a Man to some Conception of any thing that has not fallen under his Senses, we do it by the comparing it to something that already has; by offering him some Similitude, Resemblance, or Analogy to help his Conception. As for example, to give a Man a Notion of a Country to which he is a stranger, we produce a Map to him. Now a Map is only Paper and Ink, which in themselves have very little likeness to Earth, Mountains, Valleys, Lakes and Rivers. Yet none can deny, but by Proportion and Analogy they are very instructive; and if any should imagine, that those Countrys are really Paper, because the Maps that represent 'em are made of it, and should seriously draw Conclusions from that Supposition, he would expose his Understanding.* His Grace herein plainly mistakes the use of Maps, which are not design'd to represent Mountains, Valleys, Lakes and Rivers, to those who have no Ideas of them. Maps suppose Men to have those Ideas, before-hand; and the several Figures and Marks in Maps are not design'd to give Men those Ideas, but by Marks agreed on by the

World to signify those known Ideas: and they no more represent the things themselves, than the Words that stand for Sounds represent Sounds. Thus a River in a Map represents not Water, nor would ever give a Man any Idea of Water, but is a Mark in a Map agreed to signify Water to those who know what Water is; as the word *acute* is agreed to signify a certain Sound to those who knew the Sound before. There are some things which Maps do represent to us, and that with the greatest Clearness; such as the winding and turning of Rivers, the shape of a Country, &c. but what they do not represent thus clearly to us, is not to be understood by the mere view of Maps in any other way than as Words by agreement signify Ideas. So that his Grace's way of Analogy, is a way that can never teach a Man any thing at all; and I durst challenge his Grace, or any other Man, to assign any other possible way of Instruction, but either to give a Man by Pictures and Figures a just Representation of things which he was not before acquainted with, or else to use Words or Marks, which are not design'd to represent, but to signify Ideas known beforehand. And if these are the only two ways of Instruction, his Grace's way by Analogy is no way of Instruction at all. Either the Marks in Maps represent things truly, or are only Marks standing for Ideas, as Words do for Sounds. If the Marks represent things truly, then they do not represent things analogically; if they are only Marks for Ideas as Words are for Sounds, then they cannot be design'd to represent things at all, but they suppose Men acquainted with the things themselves before. Now his Grace's Analogical Knowledge must be away of Knowledge between those two, which I think is impossible for him or any one to define and describe by any instance in any Science whatever.

His Grace uses several other Instances, to show that other Sciences are taught in his Analogical way; but the Principles already advanc'd with relation to his Grace's Example of Maps, may be apply'd to those others (which are all of the same kind with that of Maps, and proceed on the same Mistakes) by any intelligent Reader.

Thus I have laid before his Grace what I thought fit to say on the occasion of his Sermon. I have indeed been very short; but considering that I speak to one of his Grace's Learning and Penetration, and that this matter is not likely to be consider'd by any but the Learned, I thought there was no need to insist more largely on several things that might have been thought necessary for the Information of ordinary Readers. But I hope I have said enough to make his Grace employ his Thoughts once more on the Subject, and give us a further *Eclaircissement* on the Subject of this Sermon, and of his Book *De Origine Mali*; which I wish he may perform to the Satisfaction of the Publick, and thereby prevent my design of handling these Questions: which would not be thought so difficult as some imagine 'em to be, if Men would but be willing to bring every Proposition they use to the trial. Whereas Men will for ever esteem some Propositions to be sacred and true, and never suspect them of Falshood; and that is the true reason why they are so confounded, and advance such contradictory Schemes about the Prescience, Wisdom, Justice, and other Attributes of God. But if they would impartially examine every thing (how Sacred soever, it may be to them before they examin'd) all things would then appear harmonious and consistent in the Intellectual System, as they do in the Mechanick System of the Universe.